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 effects of human action upon all objects short of

A N A T T E M P T

TO EXPLAIN SOME OF THE

THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES.

Johnston ought not to take the

Let us earnestly that we may no longer have a lot of
states that approve ourselves; though we have no
action to the public mind, such a result is to be feared.

PRICE SIX - PENCE.

[illegible]

WOLSTON, Mary Ann, 1772

‘ THOSE who contend that nothing less can
‘ justify subscription to the Thirty-nine articles than the
‘ actual belief of each and every separate proposition they
‘ contain, must suppose that the legislature expected the
‘ consent of ten thousand men, and that in perpetual suc-
‘ cession, not to one controverted proposition, but to
‘ many hundreds. It is hard to be conceived how this
‘ could be expected by any who observed the incurable
‘ diversity of human opinion upon all subjects short of
‘ demonstration.’

‘ If the authors of the law did not intend this, what
‘ did they intend? They intended to exclude from offices
‘ in the church, 1. All abettors of popery. 2. Ana-
‘ baptists, who were at that time a powerful party on the
‘ Continent. 3. The Puritans, who were hostile to the
‘ episcopal constitution; and, in general, the leading
‘ members of such sects or foreign establishments as
‘ threatened to overthrow our own.’

‘ Whoever finds himself comprehended within these
‘ descriptions ought not to subscribe.’

PALEY'S  *Philosophy.*

“ Let us entreat that we may no longer have a set of
“ articles that aggrieve ourselves: though we have no
“ objection to the subscribing such a reasonable form as
“ shall be thought necessary to secure a Protestant church
“ against it's being committed to the care of a Papist or
“ Unbeliever.

“ Or, if this be too great a happiness to be thought
“ attainable, let us trust that we shall at least get re-
“ moved that *Form of Subscription* which, in its present
“ state, requires such a latitude in a solemn act as no
“ honest man would allow himself to use on any other
“ contract, however trifling.”

WOLLASTON'S *Address to the Clergy*, 1772.

D. of Grafton
1789

*K. England - Church of
Articles.*

A N A T T E M P T

TO EXPLAIN SOME OF THE

THIRTY - NINE ARTICLES

O N

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES;

B Y

A MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED for J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

M, DCC, LXXXIX.



PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

LONDON.

THE EDITOR TO THE READER.

READER,

IT is a thing open and evident to all serious and capable observers of the moral and religious state of this kingdom, that, in point of the long wished for and much solicited removal of subscription and conformity to human creeds and articles of faith, we have been in a retrograde state, since the days of venerable Hoadley, and through the whole of the present reign; though the necessity of such a reformation has never been equally held forth, and more generally allowed in any time.

Not unconnected with this fact is the remark of a prelate*, very lately deceased, himself not averse to have become a reformer in these respects; ‘ that, at a period like the present, when revelation had been cleared and freed from many things that disguised and defaced it, and shewn to be entirely rational, and worthy of the Divine Being, the number of unbelievers should be increased, and increasing.’

* Dr. Shipley, bishop of St. Asaph.

Amidst

Amidst other assignable causes, to none more may we ascribe this very general infidelity, especially in the upper and opulent ranks of life, than to the forbidding aspect which the gospel wears in our creeds and articles, which are taken for the very teachings of Jesus himself and his apostles, though two greater disparities cannot be, especially with regard to the *magna moralia*, as my Lord Bacon calls them, the leading points of moral practice; and thus the divine truth is unworthily aspersed and rejected.

Most ardently therefore is it to be desired and sought for, that these obstacles to the reception of it may be removed; and that such multitudes in all christian countries, and in our own, may not thereby be turned away from the means of virtuous improvement for a future state of being, with which their benevolent Creator hath furnished them.

But there is a grievance and distress of a peculiar kind, which is felt by the conscientious minister of the established church, from the prostrate, unreformed state of things among us. Entering into the ministry with the most upright views of serving the immortal interests of his fellow-creatures, and approving at first the terms on which he is admitted to his office, in searching the scriptures afterwards, he finds it difficult to reconcile many things required of him with his growing convictions;

tions; yet is unwilling, thinks it not right, to quit a function, in which he experiences himself capable of being of some benefit to others, and not knowing in what other way to lay out the talent committed to him, he is constrained to become, in the best manner he can, his own interpreter and expofitor of the doctrines prefcribed to him, fo as to go on in his work with fome degree of felf-approbation. Many worthy names, living and dead, might be mentioned, who have thus quieted their minds in thefe anxious fituations, which are daily becoming more frequent. How the affecting inftance of a perfon wholly unknown, of this defcription, fell in my way, and is now offered to the public, the following extract of the letter that accompanied it will fatisfy the reader, and be a proper introduction to it:

January 29, 1789.

‘ WILL you read this letter——, and
 ‘ admit one, to whose perfon and name you are
 ‘ altogether a ftranger, —— to break upon
 ‘ you with a freedom, perhaps only to be autho-
 ‘ rised by a habit of the utmoft intimacy? My
 ‘ fituation in life is an humble one, that of a cu-
 ‘ rate of the eftablifhed church, with a very nu-
 ‘ merous, growing family ——. It is poffible
 ‘ that I may be appointed to the important office
 ‘ of preaching the gofpel of Jefus Chrift to a pa-
 ‘ rish of confiderable extent. I muft of courfe
 ‘ 6 subscribe

' subscribe to the 39 articles, and make a decla-
 ' ration which I shall utter with a trembling voice.
 ' Yet to what should I have recourse ——— ?
 ' I fly for succour to the arguments of the excel-
 ' lent Blackburne, in the preface to his charges
 ' ———. The other professions it is too late
 ' for me to attempt. Trade my habits forbid me
 ' to undertake. I must then fall into an useless in-
 ' active course of life, which would induce a state
 ' of spiritless dejection. At present my humble
 ' efforts, as a minister, have been generally ac-
 ' ceptable; and the natural consequence of a firm
 ' belief in Christianity has given me a degree of
 ' estimation calculated to enforce the doctrines I
 ' urge in public and in private. I am in the
 ' hands of a God of mercy. In my sermons,
 ' though not many years since inclined to be zea-
 ' lous for what is called orthodoxy, I now keep
 ' to the purity of the gospel; and, avoiding all
 ' controversial terms, I take the passage from the
 ' epistle to Titus, ii. 11. 14. as the sum and sub-
 ' stance of religious instruction. Never will I of-
 ' fend my conscience so far as to speak from the
 ' pulpit what I do not myself believe to be true.
 ' That the gospel of Jesus may avail to the most
 ' glorious edification, even fettered as it is by the
 ' establishment, I have seen in some villages,
 ' where the pastors have imbibed the earliest at-
 ' tachment to the tenets of the church. In a town
 ' the case is different; and there infidelity, I am
 ' afraid,

' afraid, is the almost general consequence.——
 ' Might not good arise then for some rational be-
 ' lievers to continue in the ministry, who, by
 ' dwelling on the evidences of their faith, and
 ' pointing out the natural effect of a firm persua-
 ' sion of the truth; in short, by true evangelical
 ' preaching may save those that hear them, and I
 ' trust obtain salvation for themselves from the in-
 ' finite mercy of their heavenly Father? Suffer
 ' the defence to work as far as it will reach.——
 ' But to the cause of my offering you this packet:
 ' Let me beg of you to read the enclosed exposi-
 ' tion ——, but without permitting it to place
 ' the writer in too favourable a point of view.
 ' Will the publication of it answer any one good
 ' end? If my conduct be every way unjustifiable,
 ' it certainly will not. If otherwise, may I beg
 ' of you to take the trouble of handing it to the
 ' press, and ordering a few copies to be printed,
 ' &c. &c."

THE author had prefixed a particular address to
 some respectable names of his ecclesiastical supe-
 riors, with whom he was in some degree connected,
 or whose general character he held in esteem; in
 which he acquaints them with the design of his pub-
 lication. The former part of this, the editor hath
 judged it more fitting to drop; but could not
 excuse or justify himself in suppressing or secreting
 what follows, in the conclusion, from the eyes of

the serious * public, who will be much moved with it; and he trusts, that the governors of the church, whom it deeply concerns, will not view it with indifference and neglect.

FAREWELL.

* That there are gentlemen of the laity in the kingdom, and of the established church, who are convinced of the truth of our religion, and zealous for the purity of its profession, is evident from many tokens, in the midst of the general ignorance, and indisposition to it. This appeared very particularly the last year, in a pamphlet, which plainly bespoke itself to come from one who had much considered the subject, and was deeply interested in it. The title was 'HINTS, &c. submitted to the attention of the clergy, nobility, and gentry, *newly* associated, by a layman, a true friend to the constitution in church and state. London: printed for Rivington, Dilly, &c. 1788.

To the BISHOPS of, &c, &c.

SUFFER me then to lay before you the only sense in which one who hath for several years been a minister, who hath a large family to educate and set forward in the world, yet whose disposition hath never been considered as mercenary and selfish, can in future subscribe to the thirty-nine articles. In some I have explained away the sense of the compiler, more than is authorized by the example of the great and good Bishop Burnet; but surely not in all, as the explication which he evidently allows to the seventeenth can scarcely be accommodated to the words of the original. If by persuading others, who suffer what I have done upon the awful subject, to retain their usefulness in the world, by continuing to officiate in the church of England, confessedly imperfect as it is, and to fulfil the important duties of a parish priest (no

dishonest wish, I humbly hope;) and still more, if I may be suffered to indulge a hope that the conscientious struggles of one, who is a christian after searching diligently into the evidences of his faith, and who is persuaded that many among his brethren labour under the same difficulties with himself, will excite the compassion of his superiors, and induce them to lend their aid, that these stumbling blocks of human introduction may effectually be removed, my intention in giving this little book to the public (in the latter view, beyond comparison the most desirable), will be gloriously answered.

To the GOD of MERCY I commend myself and it.

ARTICLE I.

“ THERE is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible.” This *one* great and glorious Being, the Father of all his rational creatures, decreed from all eternity that he would more especially, in a figurative sense be the Father of the christian world; that he would also endue with divine power and wisdom, with a participation as it were of his godhead and substance, or divine nature, a Man, who, in the Scripture language, on account of his miraculous conception and unlimited endowments of the Spirit, by way of eminence and distinction, is called the Son of God; and, thirdly, that he would impart to the disciples of Christ, and to their immediate followers, the gift of prophecy and of working many and stupendous miracles, which, in the New Testament is termed the Holy Spirit, as in the Old it is styled the Spirit or breath of God.

ARTICLE II.

“ THE Son, which is the Word,” or wisdom, of the Father,” or who was endued by *the Father* with divine wisdom, decreed by the Almighty from everlasting to appear as the representative of *the very and eternal God*, was supernaturally conceived in the womb of a virgin; and thus the *divine* attributes of power and wisdom were *joined* with the *human nature*, and united in the person of the Lord Christ, who, by virtue of his miraculous conception, supernatural endowments, and most important office, was *truly* a *divine* being, as well as a *man*; who *suffered*, not in appearance, as some ancient visionaries supposed, but *in reality*;

who *was crucified, dead, and buried*, that he might supply us with the most efficacious motives to obey his righteous laws, and thus qualify *us* for the *mercy* of his and our heavenly *Father*; and, to effect this infinitely gracious purpose, he surrendered up his life a figurative sacrifice to God for us, that by giving the fullest proof of a future state of retribution, he might *not only* influence us to confine our *natural* passions and appetites within the boundaries of rectitude, *but also* incite *men* to true and perfect repentance *for sins actually* committed.

A R T I C L E III.

“ As Christ died for us, and was buried, so
“ also is it to be believed that he” continued for some time in the state of the dead.

A R T I C L E IV.

“ CHRIST did truly rise again from death, and” appeared again in “ his body, with flesh, bones, “ and all things appertaining to the perfection of “ man’s nature, wherewith” in the presence of his disciples he was taken up, a cloud receiving him out of their sight; and his mortal body being changed to a glorified body, he “ ascended into “ heaven, and there” abideth in a highly exalted state, “ until he return to judge all men at the last “ day.”

A R T I C L E V.

“ THE Holy Ghost,” or Divine Spirit, or efficacious Power of God “ proceeding from the “ Father, and” through the appointment of the Supreme Being, promised to the first christians, and imparted by “ the Son, is” the *glorious power of the Father’s substance*, or nature, and was made most evident to the human race in the works, and wisdom of our Lord, *the Son of God*, and is *truly*
and

and from everlasting Divine, or a property of the one *eternal God*.

A R T I C L E VI.

A COMPLETE rule of Faith.

A R T I C L E VII.

“ THE old Testament is not contrary to the new; for, both in the old and new Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by” the prophecies concerning *Christ* in the old, and by his own promises and resurrection in the new; “ who is the only” perfect “ mediator between God and Man, being both” the immediate representative of *God* by appointment and delegated power; and, as it were, Divine, by virtue of his miraculous conception, and “ being Man,” like unto his brethren, subject to all the infirmities of human nature. “ Wherefore they are not to be “ heard, &c, &c, &c.”

A R T I C L E VIII.

“ THE three Creeds, —, ought thoroughly “ to be received and believed, *so far as they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.*” To render this article consistent with the sixth, it should seem necessary to understand it in this restrained sense. *Query.* If this interpretation be altogether adverse to the positiveness of the words,—Father of mercy!

A R T I C L E IX.

ORIGINAL sin is not the mere following of Adam in transgressing a positive law of God, but is that corruption of the human race, by which man hath very far deviated from the original innocence of our first parents, and is become, as it were, naturally inclined to give too much way to appetite and passion, so that the fleshly and spiritual

principles are too frequently at variance; and therefore no man is perfectly pure in the eyes of the God of Holiness; and consequently meriteth not his favour. And this natural infection adhereth even to sincere christians, by which the fleshly principle is not altogether subject to the law of God. And though Mercy and Acceptance are promised, if we sincerely endeavour to obey the laws of Christ, yet our frequent frailties are more than sufficiently sinful to keep us humble, and supplicants for pardon.

A R T I C L E X.

MAN, in a state of nature, without other assistance and support than the inferences of his own reason, without any certain direction from Heaven, experience shews us, is not equal to the knowledge of the complete duties of religion. Christianity alone supplied us with the motives and sanctions to improve our nature to the utmost, and this free gift of God is held forth to incite our most earnest endeavours to live righteously, soberly, and godlily, to which we are also encouraged by the animating prospect of divine assistance.

A R T I C L E XI.

To be accounted righteous, or to be justified, in the true sense of the texts through both the Testaments, generally means to be received into a state of favour. We Christians have received the blessing of God's revealed will, and his promise of eternal happiness, not because the works and deservings of our forefathers merited so inestimable a favour, or that our own good deeds can ever entitle us to an eternity of happiness; but the Gospel promise is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, who, by an uniform submission and obedience to the gracious design of his and our heavenly Father, merited the reward of being held forth

forth as the Saviour of the world from the power and punishment of sin. And this salvation is to be attained by such a firm persuasion of the truth of his divine mission, as shall influence us to the utmost possible rectitude of conduct. "For Christ came to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

ARTICLE XII.

THOUGH good works, which are the effects of religious principle, and the natural consequence of a firm belief in the gospel, cannot render us perfect in the sight of God, or entitle us, independently of the divine mercy and goodness, to everlasting happiness; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God, as being consonant to his commands delivered through Jesus Christ. And so clearly do they arise from an influential persuasion of the great truths contained in the gospel, that by them the principles of a true Christian may be as evidently known, as a tree is discerned by the fruit.

ARTICLE XIII.

WORKS done by our remote ancestors before the promulgation of the gospel, or at this time by those who are ignorant of its important truths and efficacious principles, are not comparatively so acceptable to God; as they cannot be attended with that uniform incitement to right action, which springs from a knowledge and belief of Christianity; neither can they, independent of the Divine goodness, make men meet to receive the inestimable benefits promised to Christians. Besides, they may naturally be supposed to contain a much greater degree of imperfection than such as are performed in compliance with the declared will of God. But still we must ever bear in mind,
thāt

that God is the Father of all men, and that he will judge the world in righteousness; that every equitable allowance will be made for the effect of ignorance which is not voluntary; that as more will be expected from Christians, in proportion to their superior light, so to every man that worketh good, whether Heathen, Mahometan, Jew, or Christian; glory, honour, and peace, will be proportionably imparted in the day, when God by Jesus Christ will judge and adjust the inscrutable moral circumstances of the world; for he will render to every man according to his deeds.

A R T I C L E X I V .

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A R T I C L E X V .

“CHRIST — came to be the lamb without spot, who, by his exemplary sacrifice of obedience and submission to his heavenly Father, both in his life and in his death, and also by his resurrection, which is a pattern and assurance of that resurrection he hath promised to us, might supply the world with motives sufficient to take away the power and punishment of sin.

A R T I C L E X V I .

“NOT every dangerous sin, willingly committed after” our sincere profession of Christianity, is the unpardonable “sin against the Holy Ghost” described by our Lord, and which was peculiar to the unbelieving Jews of the first age, who blasphemed his divine miracles. Wherefore that a Christian, who hath fallen into sin, may afterwards repent and obtain forgiveness from his heavenly Judge, “is not to be denied.” After the fullest conviction of the truth “we may depart” from the *gracious* terms of acceptance, “and fall into
“sin,”

“ sin,” and by the superintending providence of God “ we may rise again, and amend our lives.”

A R T I C L E XVII.

THE gospel-promise of eternal life was “ the
“ everlasting purpose of God ; by which before
“ the foundations of the world were laid, he de-
“ creed,” in his inscrutable wisdom, to reveal his
gracious intention, by Jesus Christ, gradually to
the human race, who were thus supplied with the
most powerful motive, namely, the promise of
“ everlasting salvation,” to deliver them from the
power and punishment of sin. Therefore such, as
have already been made partakers of this inesti-
mable blessing, are become Christians at the pe-
riod which for them seemed most suitable to the
divine wisdom ; through the divine assistance they
sincerely endeavour to obey Christ’s commands ;
they become entitled to the glorious privileges
proffered them by God of his own free benefi-
cence ; they succeed to the blessed appellation,
formerly bestowed on the Jews, but now imparted
to all sincere Christians, of sons of God ; they re-
verently tread in the steps of their Lord and Mas-
ter ; “ they walk religiously in good works, and
“ at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to ever-
“ lasting felicity.”

As the religious consideration of the Divine be-
nevolence towards those in particular, to whom
the gospel is revealed, “ is full of comfort” to
pious minds, such as are sensible of the support
which the knowledge of those sanctions of mora-
lity held forth in the gospel, hath tended to esta-
blish, and are conscious of those encouragements
to fervid gratitude and reliance upon God, which
it hath conferred : “ so, for curious and sensual
“ persons,” destitute of religious principle, and
by evil habits fixed, as it were, in the servitude

of sin, "to have continually before their eyes" the judgment of God against such evil courses, if it do not rouse them from their torpid infatuation, it hath a contrary and most fatal effect, either plunging them "into desperation, or into wretchedness of unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."

"FURTHERMORE we must receive God's promise in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy scripture."

N. B. The former part of this article must be rendered consistent with the concluding caution; and this difficult task I have attempted.

ARTICLE XVIII.

THAT doctrine also is to be rejected which "presumeth to say" that eternal life is truly professed to mankind by any other religion beside that which hath Christ for its author; or that the certain means of attaining it may be discovered by any other law or sect. For the scripture expressly asserteth that, as obedient disciples of Jesus Christ, we have the only certain security of obtaining the gift of everlasting happiness.

ARTICLE XIX.

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ARTICLE XX.

THE church of England, or any Christian society, hath power to decree such rites and ceremonies, as accord with the apostle's direction, that all things be done to edification, to order, and to peace; and it hath "authority so to expound one place of scripture, that it be not repugnant to another. Wherefore—&c."

ARTICLE

ARTICLES XXI. XXII.

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ARTICLE XXIII.

It is contrary to order and to peace for any man to take upon himself the office of a minister, before he be called to execute the same, according to the rules of the society to which he shall join himself.

ARTICLE XXIV.

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ARTICLE XXV.

“ SACRAMENTS ordained of Christ are not
“ only badges or tokens of Christian men’s pro-
“ fession ; but rather they are,” as it were, histo-
rical testimonies, and affecting symbols of the fa-
vour and beneficence of God in the promulgation
of the gospel-covenant, and of his gracious pro-
mises to sincere disciples of his Son : by meditat-
ing on which our hearts are so framed that we
are not only excited to, but “ strengthened and
“ confirmed” in, religious obedience.

THERE are two sacraments, &c. &c.

ARTICLE XXVI.

— — — — —

ARTICLE XXVII.

“ BAPTISM is not only a sign of profession
“ and mark of difference whereby Christian men
“ are” generally distinguished from others, but,
in the original form of administering the rite, it
was a symbol of an entrance on a new life, (in op-
position

position to the former state of ignorant heathenism) a life of holiness and sincere obedience to the laws of our Saviour. By fulfilling these terms alone we are now true members of Christ's church: to these only the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be sons of God, are annexed. And this our covenant was confirmed to us at its promulgation by the miracles which proceeded from the Spirit, or power of God. By the continuance of this rite, which is a transmitted memorial of the truth of our religion, our faith is strengthened, and the gracious means of salvation are promoted "by virtue of prayer to God. The baptism of young children is retained by the church of England, as thought most "agreeable with the institution of Christ."

ARTICLE XXVIII.

"THE Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another;" but also is an attestation of our belief that eternal life was truly revealed by our Saviour, for an effectual sanction of right conduct; who died and rose again to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to redeem us from all iniquity. To such, therefore, "as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is" declaratory of our professing ourselves sincere members of that religion, for the establishment of which the Body of Christ was broken on the cross; and likewise the Cup of Blessing we drink in remembrance of his Blood, which was shed for the same most beneficent purpose.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION, &c.

THE doctrine of Christ, for the sealing of which he submitted to be slain, and his body to be crucified.

fied, is, in the figurative language of Scripture, eaten, and symbolically received in the Lord's supper. And this can only be received by the medium of faith, for " he that cometh to God," or to the great teacher sent by God, " must believe " that he is a rewarder of them that diligently " seek him."

ARTICLE XXIX.

THE wicked and unbelievers, although they outwardly profess themselves Christ's disciples, " by receiving bread and wine, the memorials of his body and blood; " yet in no wise do they partake " of " the promises which Christ engaged should be fulfilled to his obedient servants; " but rather, " to their condemnation," do they hypocritically and profanely pollute the most solemn rite of our religion.

ARTICLE XXX.

ARTICLE XXXI.

THE last offering of obedience to death once made by Christ, completed his part of the scheme formed by Divine benevolence, to furnish mankind with motives for departing from iniquity, and with terms easy to be fulfilled for *reconciling* the God of Holiness to his erring creatures of the human race, and on which he would be *satisfied* with their sincere, though imperfect, obedience, and would pardon the transmitted corruption and enormous sinfulness which filled the world at the period when the gospel was promulged. And there is no other scheme of reconciliation expressly revealed, but this alone. " Wherefore, &c.

ARTICLE XXXII.

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ARTICLE XXXIII.

THAT person, who, by open denunciation of the "whole Christian society, to which he had "joined himself, is rightly cut off, &c, &c."

N. B. In the present state of things, the *right* performance of this act is next to impossible.

ARTICLE XXXIV.

— — — — —

N. B. Let the whole Church, laity as well as clergy, judge the supposed offender; not the clergy alone.

ARTICLE XXXV.

————— "necessary for these times"
i.e. When the Articles were compiled.

ARTICLES XXXVI. XXXVII. XXXVIII. XXXIX.

10 FEB 58

THE END